

**Ohio Senate Health Committee
Ohio Vision Professionals Board
Budget Recommendations for SFY 2024/2025 Testimony
Anne Gonzales, Executive Director
May 2, 2023**

Good morning, Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee. My name is Anne Gonzales, Executive Director of the Ohio Vision Professionals Board. I truly appreciate the opportunity to provide an overview of the Ohio Vision Professionals Board (VPB) and our budget recommendations.

- The VPB employs a staff of four and licenses optometrists, ocularists, and opticians.
- The Board is governed by seven members appointed by the Governor.
- As a regulatory agency, the Board is fully supported by fees and receives no GRF funding.
- No proposed fee changes for the FY2024-FY2025 biennium. (Fees have not increased since 2001 for Optometrists and 2014 for Opticians).
- Executive budget recommendations total approximately \$1.2 million over the biennium.
 - The proposed budget will allow the Board to maintain current service levels and staff.
 - Approximate uses of the budget: 75% for personal costs; 24% for supplies, maintenance, and equipment; and 1% for purchases personal services.

Projects for SFY 2024-2025 include increases in costs for the eLicense system, converting annual renewals to biennial renewals for all licensees with passage of HB509, thus resulting in a one-time administrative and information technology cost associated with adjusting of the renewal schedule. The budget funding for fiscal year 2024 is \$608, 684. Funding for fiscal year 2025 is \$619, 684 for a total biennium budget of \$1.2 million. The proposed budget



illustrates a 9.2% decrease from the SFY 2023 and a 1.8% increase over SFY 2024. As required, by the Ohio Revised Code ORC 4734.54, all receipts of the VPB are deposited into the Occupational and Professional Licensing Fund, also known as the 4K90 fund.

For a bit of history, the 132nd General Assembly consolidated the State Board of Optometry and the Optical Dispensers Board into the Ohio Vision Professionals Board in January of 2018. It achieved administrative efficiencies and regulatory functions. The VPB is the regulatory body for the licensing and registering of nearly 6,600 optometrists, opticians, ocularists and apprentices. VPB monitors compliance with continuing education requirements, approves provider program relevance to practice in Ohio and educates the licensees on the laws and rules which govern licensees and consumers on services provided by the licensees. The governing board is comprised of seven members appointed by the governor which include licensees and a public member.

The mission of the Ohio VPB is to provide statewide leadership in protecting and serving Ohioans by effectively and efficiently regulating the practices of optometrists, opticians, ocularists and apprentices. In 2022-2023, the VPB updated the Board's website to the new Innovate Ohio Platform (IOP) statewide model. Is in the process of implementing a Safe Haven Program to offer support for practitioners working through mental health and substance use disorders. The Board's regulatory obligations also include investigating complaints about issues of incompetent, unethical, and impaired practitioners. In 2022, the Board investigated 54 formal complaints, all of which were closed. The Board also conducted 15 unannounced onsite inspections to check for compliance with the Board's laws and rules. We strive to be a national leader for the establishment of professional practice standards and licensure of those professions. The VPB employs an executive director, an investigator and two administrative personnel.



Ohio Vision Professionals Board

Mike DeWine, Governor **Anne Gonzales**, Executive Director
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to present the Ohio Vision Professionals Board's executive budget proposal to you today. The VPB has an enormous responsibility to act in the best interest in protecting and serving Ohioans with educated and ethical eye care professionals with the highest levels of accountability. The VPB respectfully requests your support with an open and collaborative process with budget deliberations. I thank the committee for their time and attention and welcome your questions and comments.